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To curb heroin addiction in the North suburbs and elsewhere, U.S. Rep. Mark Kirk (R-IL) is backing legislation that will put \$150 million towards staunching the flow of weapons from the United States to Mexico.

The bill would give federal grants to California, Arizona, New Mexico and Texas to increase local law enforcement and focus attention on the large role that firearms play in gang activity.

“When you have gangs, you’re going to have narcotics involved,” said David Soranno, an assistant special agent attorney from the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives (ATF). “When you’re going to have narcotics involved, you’re going to have guns, because they’re going to need to protect their source, protect their stash.”

President Felipe Calderón of Mexico has been battling drug cartels and organized crime since he assumed office in 2006.

“One of the ways to increase the success of President Calderón in Mexico is to make sure the ATF programs to stop the flow of weapons into Mexico are stronger,” Kirk said.

The ATF has been working with local law enforcement groups to identify individuals who are moving firearms and narcotics into Lake County.

Kirk says the problem is not only volume of drugs moving into the country, but the quality as well.

“Heroin coming into the United States, into Chicago and into Lake County, is more pure than

ever before,” said Kirk. “As one DEA agent told me, a top drug dealer forgot to tell his distributors to cut the heroin so as it hit the streets, you had a wave of overdoses because this material was far more pure than before.”

Because of the way it’s ingested, pure heroin can attract more users in the suburbs.

“Suburban kids will not use a needle as their entry drug, but when heroin comes in pure, it can be snorted,” Kirk said. “And then develops a life of addiction, which leads to needles, drugs, and increased violence. To make sure that we don’t have that future evolve in the suburbs, which is why we’re backing this legislation.”

The bill was introduced in Congress, which is currently in recess. No action is scheduled yet for the bill.